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BAGHDAD FOR POL, POLMIL, NCT, ROL COORDINATOR, USAID, IRMO/IPCC,

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SUBJECT: KURDISTAN ISLAMIC GROUP SEEKS U.S. RELATIONS

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CLASSIFIED BY: JBIGUS, PRT LEADER, REO Kirkuk, DoS.

REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

11. SUMMARY. (C) The Kurdistan Islamic Group (KIG) supported U.S. invasions in Afghanistan and Iraq, but has been disappointed with some U.S. actions toward it. The party seeks to uphold the holiness of Islam and advocates Sharia law as the main source of guidance on Iraqi law. The KIG and the Kurdistan Islamic Union (KIU) share good relations but differ ideologically on social and political solutions to Iraq. Our contacts complained that the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) illegally confiscated former Ba'athist buildings the KIG occupied after the Kurdish uprising in 1991. They requested U.S. help in releasing 37 of its members who allegedly were illegally jailed by the KDP and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). The KDP denied giving an alleged fatwa to execute Mariwan Halabjaee for authoring the book, "Sex, Women, and Islamic Law." END SUMMARY.

Supportive Overall of the United States

12. (SBU) In early March, Muhammad Radha Muhammad, head of the KIG's Kirkuk office and Iraqi Council of Representatives member, and Saman Abdullah Sa'id, member of the KIG's Relations and Cooperation Bureau expressed to IPAOs in Kirkuk their views on the United States. The KIG currently has two representatives on the Iraqi Council of Representatives and six members in the Kurdistan National Assembly.

13. (C) The delegation mentioned that the KIG had issued condemning statements on the terrorist attacks in New York and in Washington, as well as on the Taliban government. Muhammad noted that the KIG after Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) wrote a letter of gratitude to the U.S. Government for liberating the Iraqi people from the Ba'athist regime. He emphasized that his party respected Iraqi democracy and human rights, claiming that the KIG since OIF had not committed any offenses against the Coalition or other parties. Muhammad said that although Coalition forces killed approximately 50 KIG members during raids on Halabjah in March 2003, the party did not harbor negative feelings toward the United States.

Frustrated With Some Coalition Actions

14. (C) KIG members, however, were disappointed that the Coalition in 2003 arrested and imprisoned KIG leader Ali Bapir on charges of having plans to attack U.S. forces and for having relations with Ansar al-Sunna. According to KIG members, after

requesting a meeting with Bapir, the Coalition detained him for 22 months "before releasing him as not guilty." Muhammad added that the KIG prior to Bapir's arrest had cooperated with the Coalition to hand over its weapons. The KIG representatives requested that the U.S. offer an official apology and compensation to the KIG for detaining Bapir and for killing KIG members during OIF.

Political Philosophy: Islam

15. (C) Muhammad said the KIG's political philosophy was Islam. Muhammad argued that Sharia law should be the main source of guidance for the Iraqi Government, and that the Constitution should not contradict Islamic principles and legalities. The KIG accepted Iraq's Constitutional language on the role of Islam. The party's goal was to appoint representatives with clean hands to work for the needs of the people. He explained that KIG members on 15 February 2006 - with permission from the KRG Interior Minister - peacefully protested against the Danish cartoons depicting the Muslim prophet.

KIG Differs From the KIU

16. (C) When asked how the KIG and KIU differed, Muhammad said the KIG, unlike the KIU, had engaged in armed resistance against the former regime. The KIG and KIU disagreed ideologically on social and political solutions to Iraq's problems. Muhammad said that the KIG was an independent party, while the KIU was an extension of the Muslim Brotherhood. He added that the KIG and KIU shared good relations as political counterparts, but the two parties did not have special ties.

Bullied by the KDP and PUK

17. (C) Muhammad requested that the U.S. pressure the KDP and

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PUK to return buildings that the KIG originally had appropriated for its own use in Dahuk province. During the Kurdish uprising in 1991, the KIG attacked and occupied several Ba'athist buildings in Dahuk, eventually renovating them into KIG offices. The KDP shortly thereafter, however, forcibly confiscated those buildings for its own purposes without providing compensation to the KIG. The KDP also imprisoned 37 KIG members, as a result of KIG resistance to those actions. Although a minority of the detainees received a trial and were found innocent, all 37 KIG members remained incarcerated, according to Muhammad. The PUK also jailed two or three KIG members. Muhammad complained that the KDP and PUK had removed the KIG from all Ba'athist buildings, but allowed smaller parties - such as the Kurdistan Democratic Socialist Party and the Kurdistan Toilers Party - to continue to occupy former regime buildings they had seized in northern Iraq.

KIG Denies Fatwa Against Author

18. (C) When asked about KIG member and Kurdistan National Assemblyman, Abd al-Qadir Sa'id's alleged fatwa to kill Mariwan Halabjaee, author of "Sex, Islamic Law, and Women," Muhammad said the fatwa was only a rumor and that Sa'id was not even a member of the KIG's fatwa committee. The KIG had issued a press statement denying that the party issued a fatwa. Muhammad added, however, that KIG leaders planned to write a book, protesting Halabjaee's writings.

KIG Views on Various Issues

19. (C) The KIG representatives asked that the U.S. focus on improving three main problems in Iraq: first, the deteriorating security situation; second, the fuel crisis; and third, Shia militia members killing Sunnis.

--The KIG members claimed that many Iraqi Muslims believed the U.S. came to Iraq to fight Islam. They argued that if the U.S. cultivated stronger relations with Islamic groups like the KIG, the U.S. would disprove those beliefs.

--The KIG received approximately \$50,000 per month from the PUK. Muhammad argued, however, that \$50,000 was too little compensation for the 2,500 martyrs the party sacrificed for the PUK in previous battles.

Comment

¶10. (C) KIG gripes against the KDP and PUK for confiscating its buildings and detaining its members without trials indicate relations are strained, despite its partnership in the Kurdish Alliance. The KIG appears to hold a more conservative Islamic line than the KIU, being more straightforward in their goal for an Iraqi Islamic state governed by Sharia law. At the same time, the KIG representatives appeared sincere in their support of current democratic trends in Iraq, such as elections, and in maintaining good relations with the United States.

Biographic Notes:

¶11. (SBU) Muhammad Radha Muhammad was born in 1969 to a religious Kurdish family in Chamchamal. He is a KIG politburo member. He studied Sharia law at Imam al-Adham college in Baghdad. He currently heads the KIG's office in Kirkuk.

¶12. (SBU) KIG leader Ali Bapir was born in Raniyah in As Sulaymaniyah province in 1960. He attended grammar school in Raniyah and secondary school in As Sulaymaniyah. Bapir studied Islamic science in An Najaf for a time, but when the Ba'athist regime tried to arrest him, he fled to Iran and finished his studies in Islamic science under Iranian clerics. Following OIF, the KIG reelected Ali Bapir as the party's spiritual leader, as well as a 25-member politburo. Bapir ran on the Kurdish Alliance list in the December 2005 national elections and was elected to the Council of Representatives. Bapir has published numerous books on Islam. He has written on human rights, the Kurdish question, the Islamic solution for the Kurdish question, social problems, elections, terrorism, and globalization. Bapir reportedly has memorized the Koran, and more than 150 of his seminars are recorded on tapes and CD's. Bapir hails from a poor family; his father was a porter. Bapir has four brothers, who are not particularly religious. One of Bapir's brothers worked for the Ba'athist regime and allegedly had a KIG member killed. Bapir, in response, killed that brother himself. Bapir married his second wife after his first wife died. He has 11 children.

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